

6th World conference on Psychology Counseling and Guidance, 14 - 16 May 2015

Meta-Cognition and Locus of Control in University Students in Context of Viewpoint to Rape

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Abstract

Rape is one of the traumatic factors that has pervasive and devastating consequences. Unlike many other major traumatic situations the concept of “rape” is controversial and prone to various myths and gender-related perceptual biases. On the other hand it is important to detect possible cognitive-based factors rendering people more prone to adopt those biases and myths. 95 subjects (49 male and 45 female) with an average age of 19 were given Meta-cognitive Awareness Inventory, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Attitudes About Rape Victims Scale and Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. Our results indicate that negative attitudes about rape victims and stereotypic thoughts about rape is closely related to meta-cognitive awareness level and self-esteem as well as locus of control.

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Peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Research and Education Center.

Keywords: Meta-cognition; Locus of Control; Trauma; Rape; Self; Self-Esteem; Attitudes About Rape

1. Introduction

Among other traumatic events rape has a unique place on its own due to cultural-based relativities about its definition since definition of rape is subject to different national and cultural interpretations (Mertha, 1980). Such sort of obscure norms and being subject to cultural-based definitions it is often possible for many people to get confused between the “phenomena” and some cultural myths. Thus, a rape myth can be defined as “mechanisms that people use to justify dismissing an incident of sexual assault from the category of, real, rape” (Walker and Bright, 2009). Belief in these “rape myths” sometimes can express itself as negative attitudes about rape victims and might results in stereotypic thoughts like some people “deserves” rape due to some specific reasons such as their way of clothing, behaving etc.

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It is a possibility that there might be a relation between probability of committing in sexual assault and degree of belief in various rape myths. Therefore it gains importance to detect risk groups have and share these stereotypic myths and their cognitive, as well as personality, dynamics. There is relatively detailed, but somewhat interesting and conflicting, information about some personality features and their relation with stereotypic beliefs about rape in literature. For instance, both high and low self-esteem is shown to be among the risk factors in committing sexual offend (Bushman and Baumeister, 1998). In fact, self-esteem level seems to facilitate cognitive biases about rape and leads to negative attitudes about rape victims (Ryan, 2003).

On the other hand there is a little, if any, amount of research in the literature that has focused on cognitive features that might underlie and/or companion various myths and stereotypic beliefs about rape behaviour. For example level of meta-cognitive development through adolescence might be among possible determinants of the probability of internalisation of such myths and stereotypic thoughts. Metacognition I can be defined as thinking about thinking or a psychological phenomenon including someones feelings and motives about him/herself and about others (Flavell, 1979). According to Vos (2001), function of cognition is about problem solving and carrying out cognitive attempts in general. On the other hand metacognition is about making regulations related with necessary cognitive steps. From this point of view people not only have cognitive processes but also do have knowledge about knowledge itself (Garner and Alexander, 1989). With this aspect “metacognition” comes into prominence as an fundamental and executive feature of human mind (Yzerbyt, Lorries and Dardenne, 1998). In fact, meta-cognition is closely related with high-order cognitive functions including decision making and locus of control of planned and executed behaviors. Perspective taking is also among the executive cognitive features closely related with meta-cognition which can be deemed as a promoting factor for building empathy with others. Thus, it is possible that higher levels of meta-cognitive development and/or meta-cognitive awareness might decrease the level of belief in rape myths and stereotypic thoughts.

This study aims to, preliminarily, inquire the relation of stereotypic beliefs about rape with meta-cognitive awareness, self-esteem and locus of control in a Turkish late adolescent population. It is the first study in literature that is directly focusing on the relation among meta-cognitive awareness level and belief in rape myths along with other parameters including self-esteem and locus of control.

2. Materials and Methods

A total of 94 university students (49 female and 45 male) with an average age of 19 were given Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), Attitudes about Rape Victims Scale (ARVS) and Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. Data were analysed with via SPSS16.0. One-way ANOVA was followed by Pearson correlation.

3. Results

One-way ANOVA revealed significant inter-group differences. Results are presented in Table-1.

Table-1 ANOVA results

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
MAIS	Between Groups	28201,313	2	14100,656	279,275	,000
	Within Groups	4594,613	91	50,490		
	Total	32795,926	93			
MTARVS	Between Groups	2446,760	2	1223,380	10,041	,000
	Within Groups	11087,155	91	121,837		

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